



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest

Bridgeport Ranger District
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File Code: 1950

Date: March 5, 2014

Dear Interested Parties:

In April 2013, the Bridgeport Ranger District released a Notice of Proposed Action/Scoping Notice for the East Walker Landscape Habitat Improvement Project. The East Walker Landscape Habitat Improvement project would reduce pinyon-juniper encroachment into sagebrush ecosystems and riparian areas, improving habitat quality for Bi-State sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate and sagebrush-associated species. This project would improve, enhance, expand, and protect Bi-state sage-grouse habitat, prevent conversion of Phase 1 and Phase 2 pinyon-juniper stands to Phase 3, increase habitat connectivity for Bi-state sage-grouse, and reduce the risk of high severity wildfire in priority sage-grouse habitat. The need for this project is to meet the standards for sage-grouse habitats as identified in the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986) and to address priority conservation strategies for Bi-State sage-grouse as defined in the Bi-State Action Plan (2012).

The project area is located approximately 15 miles north of Bridgeport, CA (Figure 1) and includes Bi-state sage-grouse habitat within the Desert Creek-Fales and Mount Grant Population Management Units (PMUs) (Figure 2).

This letter is notification of modifications to the proposal as a result of public and internal scoping. The project area has been revised to include additional acreage requested by Nevada Department of Wildlife in adjacent priority sage grouse habitat. Proposed treatment areas have also been refined reducing the overall project size. Approximately 29,252 acres (Figure 3) are proposed for treatment. Not all pinyon-juniper trees within the proposed treatment areas would be removed. Total acres treated within each proposed treatment area would vary based on avoidance of areas with greater than 40 percent slope, avoidance of areas that sage-grouse do not use and likely will never use often indicated by pre-settlement trees, and potential avoidance of cultural sites and sensitive plants. In addition, adjustments to the project boundary have removed a majority of areas bordering private property; therefore there would be no treatment of wildland-urban interface areas. Broadcast burning is no longer proposed as a treatment method.

Comments received from the public and interdisciplinary team during the scoping period have indicated the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) is appropriate for this project. The decision notice/finding of no significant impact (DN/FONSI) for the project will determine if additional environmental analysis will be required.

This project will be subject to 36 CFR 218 parts (a) and (b). Instead of an appeal period, there will be an objection process before the final decision is made (36 CFR 218). In order to be eligible to file an objection, specific written comments related to the project must have been submitted during the 30-day opportunity for public comment period established for this project (April 4 – May 3, 2013).

For more information on how the objection process works for projects and activities implementing land and resource management plans, you may read the regulations under 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B on the Forest Service web site at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-03-27/pdf/2013-06857.pdf>. Your continued interest in this project is appreciated.

/s/Jeff Ulrich
JEFF ULRICH
District Ranger



Figure 1. East Walker Habitat Improvement Project Vicinity Area.

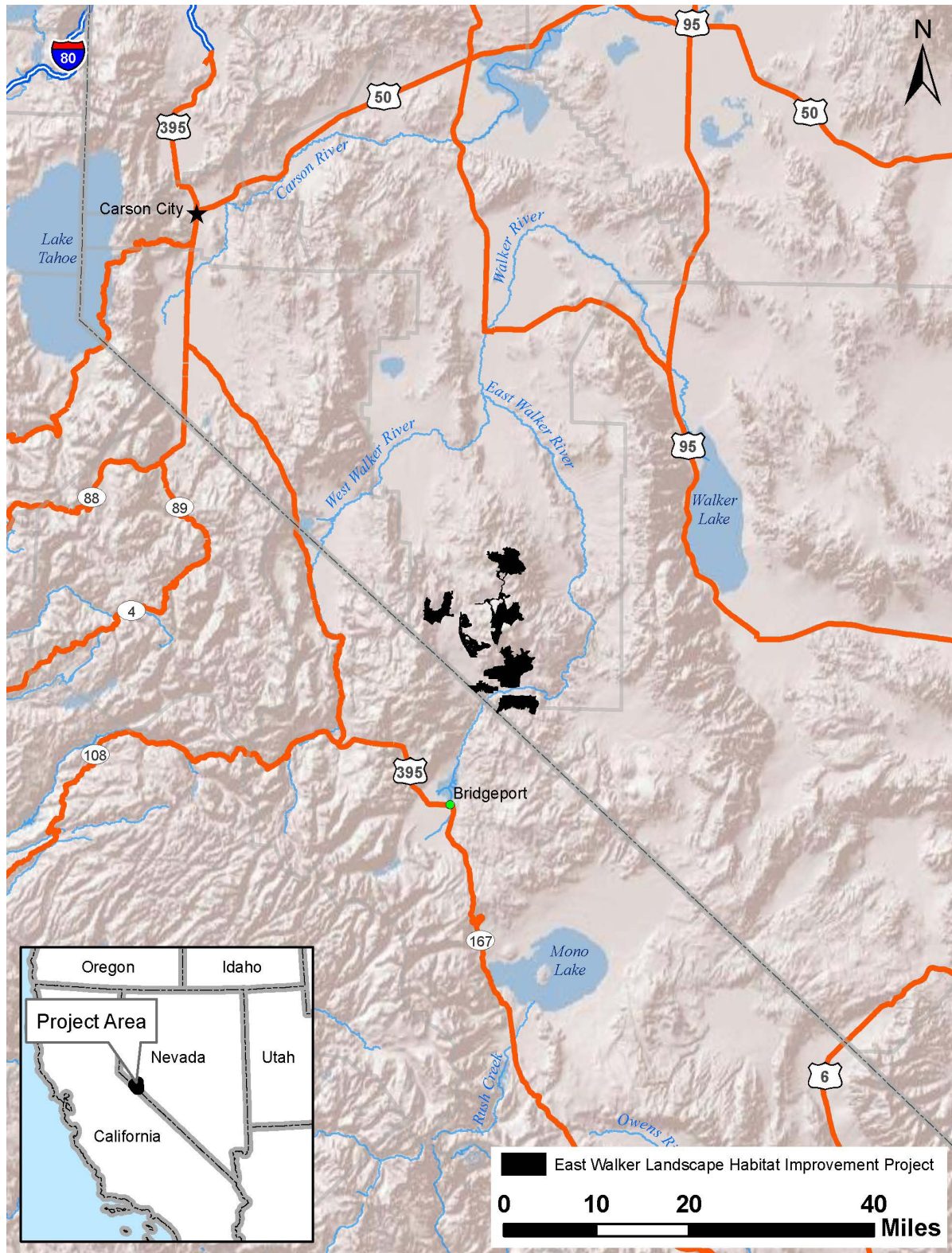


Figure 2. Desert Creek/Fales PMU and Mount Grant PMU

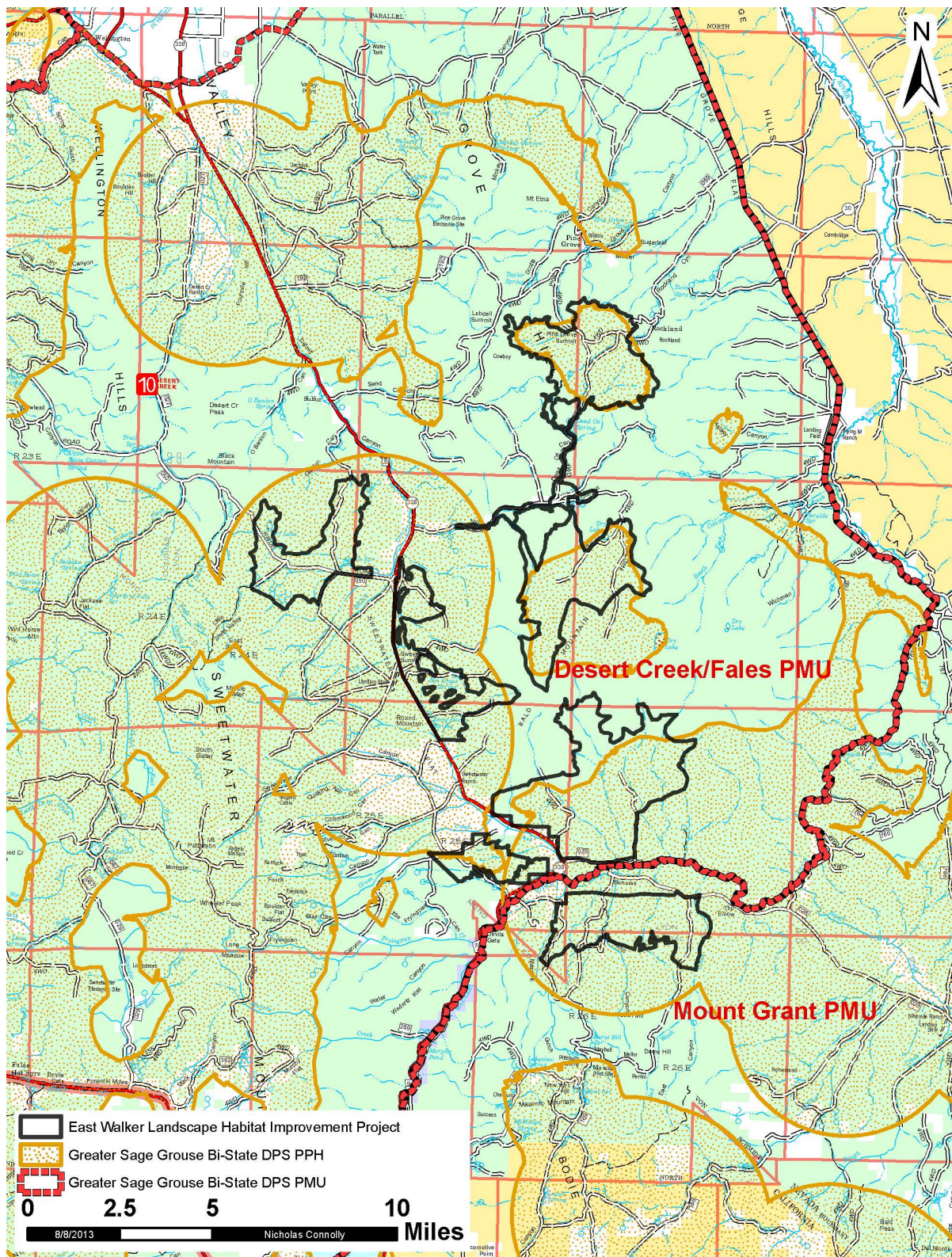


Figure 3. Proposed Treatment Areas and Types of Treatment

